



NEWS

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CHP Commissioner Responds to District Attorney's Report of Workers' Compensation Investigation

(SACRAMENTO) California Highway Patrol Commissioner Mike Brown responded today on the findings of the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office investigating suspected workers' compensation fraud:

"I would like to thank District Attorney Jan Scully and the members of the Sacramento County Grand Jury for their hard work in conducting a fair and thorough investigation into this important issue.

"Upon my appointment as commissioner in September 2004, I was immediately concerned about reports of potential abuse of CHP's workers' compensation system and ordered a full investigation. This investigation ultimately resulted in 16 cases involving senior ranking CHP employees. In April 2005, I asked District Attorney Scully to review those 16 cases of suspected workers' compensation fraud (three of the 16 cases are highlighted in the report released today by the Sacramento District Attorney). I did this to ensure the investigation was free of accusations of bias or favoritism.

"It is important for the public to know that CHP has taken numerous actions since September 2004 to evaluate and address workers' compensation costs and prevent fraud and abuse. In a report entitled "Workers' Compensation and Disability Retirement within CHP" there were 21 recommendations designed to curb rising costs and prevent abuse. Sixteen of those recommendations were within the control of CHP to implement and all have been implemented, beginning as early as December 2004. CHP has also prepared regular progress reports which can be found on our website at <http://www.chp.ca.gov/programs/workerscomp/index.html>.

"Though the DA's findings do not support criminal prosecution of any individuals, the references to failures to adhere to departmental policies are disturbing. The DA's report, in conjunction with the recommendations from the "Workers' Compensation and Disability Retirement within the CHP" will formulate a comprehensive strategy to ensure strong oversight of costs and prevention of abuse and fraud.

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“Workers’ compensation exists for those employees who suffer legitimate debilitating injuries as a result of their service to protecting and assisting the citizens of California. It is not there for those looking for opportunities to abuse the system. I will not tolerate abuses of the system as the mere suggestion of inappropriateness threatens the legitimate benefit that exists for those who deserve and need it.

“The department continues to show progress in reducing the number of new workers’ compensation claims and the costs to the department. Preliminary numbers for the end of 2006 show a 7.2 percent reduction in workers compensation costs and a savings of \$4.7 million. Additionally, preliminary numbers show a 24 percent reduction in new workers’ compensation claims filed since 2004. I anticipate that we will see those reductions continue.

“I want to assure the public that the CHP is committed to not only enforcing the traffic laws and providing service to the motoring public, but also to adhering to state and departmental policies itself while at the same time safeguarding the resources the taxpayers provide to accomplish our mission and take care of our employees.”